



BOOKMARK



Fiction and Nonfiction News from Janet Litherland

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Book Reviews

Potpourri

The bagpipes of Scotland have beckoned me for several years, and I finally answered their call! My son, daughter-in-law, and I joined a Rick Steves (PBS-TV) Highland adventure. Beginning in Edinburgh, our hotel sat at the foot of Calton Hill, from which we climbed to the top and looked out over the city. We also walked the “Royal Mile” and explored the castle.



Venturing into the Highlands, we stopped at several pictures-

esque villages, including Culross, St. Andrews (we didn't play golf), and Pitlochry. Inverness was particularly beautiful. I enjoyed visiting the castles of Urquhart (on Loch Ness) and Eilean Donan, but the most spectacular scenery was on the Isle of Skye.



We also stopped at a local distillery for a “wee

dram” of Scotch whiskey! Lots of walking and climbing, and plenty of choices for free-time exploration. A perfect vacation!

All of Janet's books are available at:

BarnesAndNoble.com
Amazon.com
and other online stores.

The Last Illusion (Rhys Bowen, 2010). In the October 2008 issue of *Bookmark* I discussed Bowen's excellent Molly Murphy series and directed you to read the books in order. Molly is an Irish immigrant and private detective in early 20th-Century America, when women just didn't do such things. This time she is hired by Harry Houdini's wife, to protect Houdini without his knowledge. For a while, Molly fears she is in over her head, unable to detect whether circumstances are real or merely illusions created by the master himself. Interesting and fun!

A Twisted Faith (Gregg Olsen, 2010). A “true crime” book full of people so naïve, manipulated, and convoluted that no one could possibly make up this story. The morning after Christmas 1997 in Bremerton, WA, a young pastor's wife was found burned to death in her home. Her death was ruled accidental; however, years later it was discovered she was dead before the fire started. Meantime, her “grieving” husband manipulated the women of his congregation into “loving” him in his grief because, after all, he had a direct line to God, and God knew what was best for everyone. I still find it hard to imagine people blindly following someone who tells them what they should think and believe; yet it happens all the time. Olsen's account is well-written, but the story itself is absolutely disgusting, especially since it is true!

The Front (Patricia Cornwell, 2008). This is a novella, which is a short novel, in this case about 180 pages of fairly large, well-spaced print. Easily read in a couple of hours. The story involves a charming (male) Massachusetts state investigator, and an obnoxious (female) district attorney who doesn't have even one redeeming feature. I disliked her so much that I really didn't care about the storyline and only hung with it because I was sitting in the dentist's office waiting for my appointment. Actually, I preferred having my teeth worked on!

Tunnel Vision (Sara Paretsky, 1994). There are 14 novels in Paretsky's V.I. Warshawski series. This one is #8 and is the first one I've read. V.I. (Victoria) is a hard-shelled private detective, tougher than any I've encountered in other detective novels. Sometimes that boldness put me off. Still, the story (a financial fraud involving charitable organizations) was very good and kept me turning pages. I'll try a later one—maybe V.I. mellowed over the next six books!

Whiteout (Ken Follett, 2004). Follett is the best-selling author of 19 books—spy novels, thrillers, and contemporary suspense. The latest, *World Without End*, which is the sequel to his hugely popular *Pillars of the Earth* (1989), has been translated into 11 different languages. His novels regularly become movies or television shows. The guy is king! *Whiteout* is a gripping thriller about the theft of a deadly virus from a medical laboratory. It is a story of a dysfunctional family, treachery, and betrayal; and it serves up a nail-biting ending.

A Different Kind of Book

FICTION AND NONFICTION NEWS FROM
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Heaven (Randy Alcorn, 2004). This book was recommended by a friend from my high school years to help me through a “rough patch” (my husband’s death). It is a carefully researched, compelling presentation of what we can expect of Heaven, or, the New Earth (Revelation 21:1). Alcorn—a teacher, conference speaker, former pastor, and author of more than 30 books—is founder and director of the nonprofit Eternal Perspective Ministries. In this book he discusses numerous questions, including: *Do Heaven’s inhabitants remember life on Earth? Will we recognize each other? Will we all appear the same age?* Each discussion is tested by scripture, in accordance with the Apostle Paul’s advice: “Test everything. Hold on to the good.” (Thessalonians 5:21). Alcorn invites readers to test his conclusions, while stating, “When biblical truths have been long neglected or ignored, attempts to present them may sound far-fetched. They may appear to be adding to or misinterpreting Scripture, when in fact they are simply portraying what Scripture has said all along but we’ve failed to grasp.” He adds, “Don’t throw out the baby of truth with the bathwater of what you regard as my mistakes—but, by all means, *do* throw out the bathwater!” Did I find this book uplifting? Yes. Looking at eternity from a new perspective was/is good for me.

A Quote from Washington Irving:

“There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love.”

A Surprising Read

Julian Comstock (Robert Charles Wilson, 2009). There are two genres of novels that I almost never read because I don’t enjoy them—literary and science fiction. This one, *Julian Comstock*, could be described as a literary science fiction novel, and I actually enjoyed it! I was drawn to it for one reason only: its title. (Those of you who’ve known me from childhood will understand immediately.) Still, I approached the book warily. Could I finish 413 pages dealing with 22nd-Century America? I can barely keep up with the technology of our current century! I needn’t have worried. This story takes place after America as we know it has collapsed and technology is a curiosity of the past, something described in “old” books. What crippled the “Secular Ancient’s” (our) economy? The End of Oil. (Creepy, huh?) Julian is a popular young Army general (soldiers once again travel on horseback) who becomes a reluctant President, replacing his tyrannical uncle, Deklan Comstock. “It was the 52nd Amendment that allowed succession by inheritance; the 53rd was the one that abolished the Supreme Court.” Fascinating book!

MY CURRENT LANGUAGE BUG: Things (not people) that “boast”: “... hotel boasts the perfect location.” “... largest organ in Britain boasts 10,268 pipes.” “... house boasts a beautiful south terrace.” “*Sex and the City 2* [movie] boasts over 125 wardrobe changes and more than \$10 million worth of couture and jewels.” Ugh!

Read back issues of *Bookmark* online at: www.janetlitherland.com/newsletter.htm



Bookmark
Janet’s Book News

Janet’s Ratings: Scaled 1 - 5 ★=OK, ★★★★★=Fantastic!

The Bone Thief (Jefferson Bass, 2010) ★★

Reckless Abandon (Stuart Woods, 2004) ★★★

Finger Lickin’ Fifteen (Janet Evanovich, 2010) ★★★★★

Janet Litherland, author of 10 nonfiction books and four novels, also is editor emeritus and former owner of Write-Choice Services, Inc., a book-development company that aspiring authors can find at: www.writechoiceservices.com.